

79 Setting the Stage for the Modern World

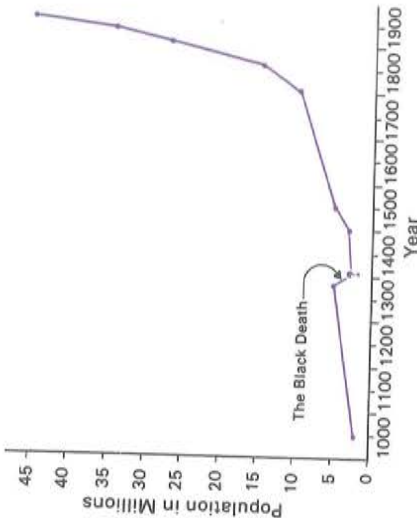
This final section of the atlas depicts a crucial event in world history: the Industrial Revolution. You will read how advances in technology during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the accompanying population growth caused dramatic changes in people's lives.

This graph shows changes in the population of England between 1000 and 1900. Notice the pattern of gradual recovery after the Black Death. By the late 1700's the population was climbing steadily.

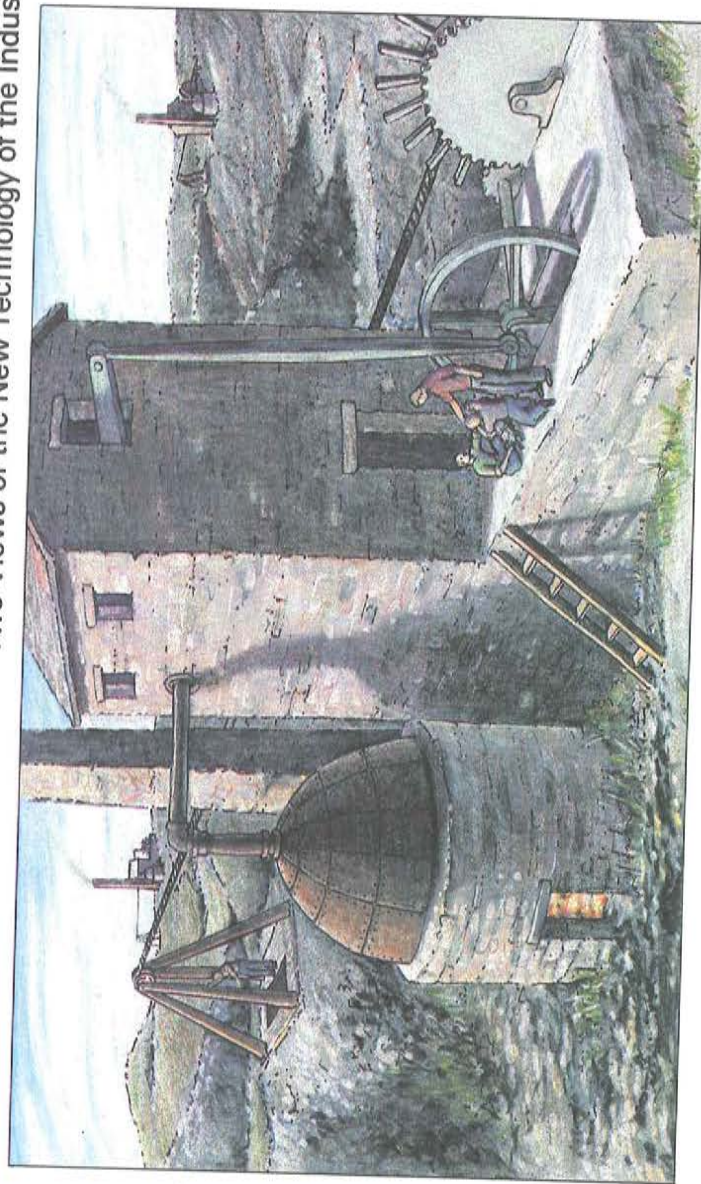
Shortly before the Industrial Revolution, improvements in British farming led to a breakthrough in food production. Increased availability of food helped to make a significant growth in population possible. The growing prosperity and increasing availability of jobs for young workers also encouraged young people to marry and have children. Growing markets for goods of all kinds and increased prosperity provided new jobs for a rapidly expanding population.

With the growth of its new industries, Britain was able to sell large quantities of manufactured goods. Much of the world was eager to own the new British technology and the goods that it produced. These exports brought badly needed profits. Britain's population was growing so fast that its farms could no longer feed everyone and imported food had to be paid for.

British Population
1000 - 1900



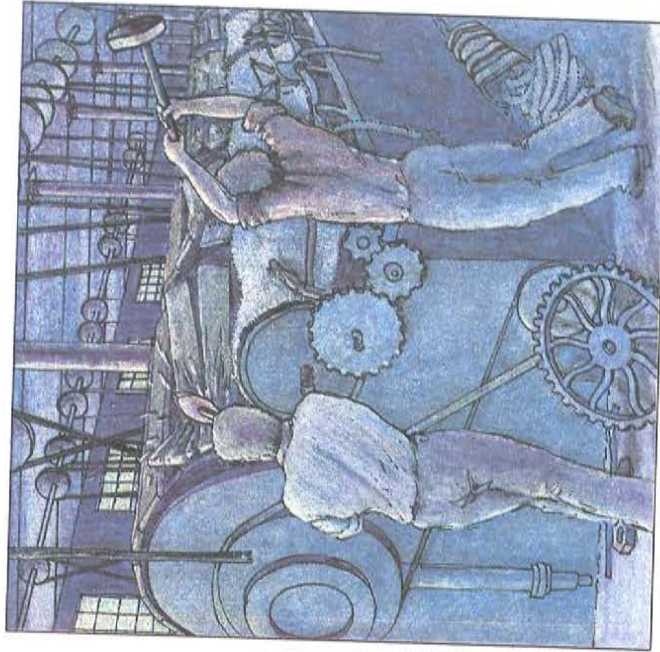
Two Views of the New Technology of the Industrial Revolution



The British encouraged inventors and their discoveries were put to use in industry. Apprentices like these young men learned the skills of the new technology.

Compare the machine being repaired in the above picture to the machine on page 88. What new technology are these apprentices learning?

What clues does the picture provide as to the industry that is using this steam engine? What industry is this likely to be?



Clearly not everyone in Britain felt about technology as did the young apprentices shown in the picture on the left. The above picture shows a small group of Luddites in action in a cotton mill.

Contrast the attitudes of the people in this picture with those of the apprentices. What might some of the reasons have been for the Luddites to want to act in this way? (Consult the glossary for a description of the Luddites.)

Why Did It Start in Britain? 80

Britain was not the only country in which industrialization could have started. In fact, its technology in the mid-eighteenth century owed much to other Western European countries. In a number of ways, however, Britain was the most likely place for industrialization to begin. As the map on this page shows, Britain — Central England and the Lowlands of Scotland — had all of the right natural assets to develop into an industrial country.

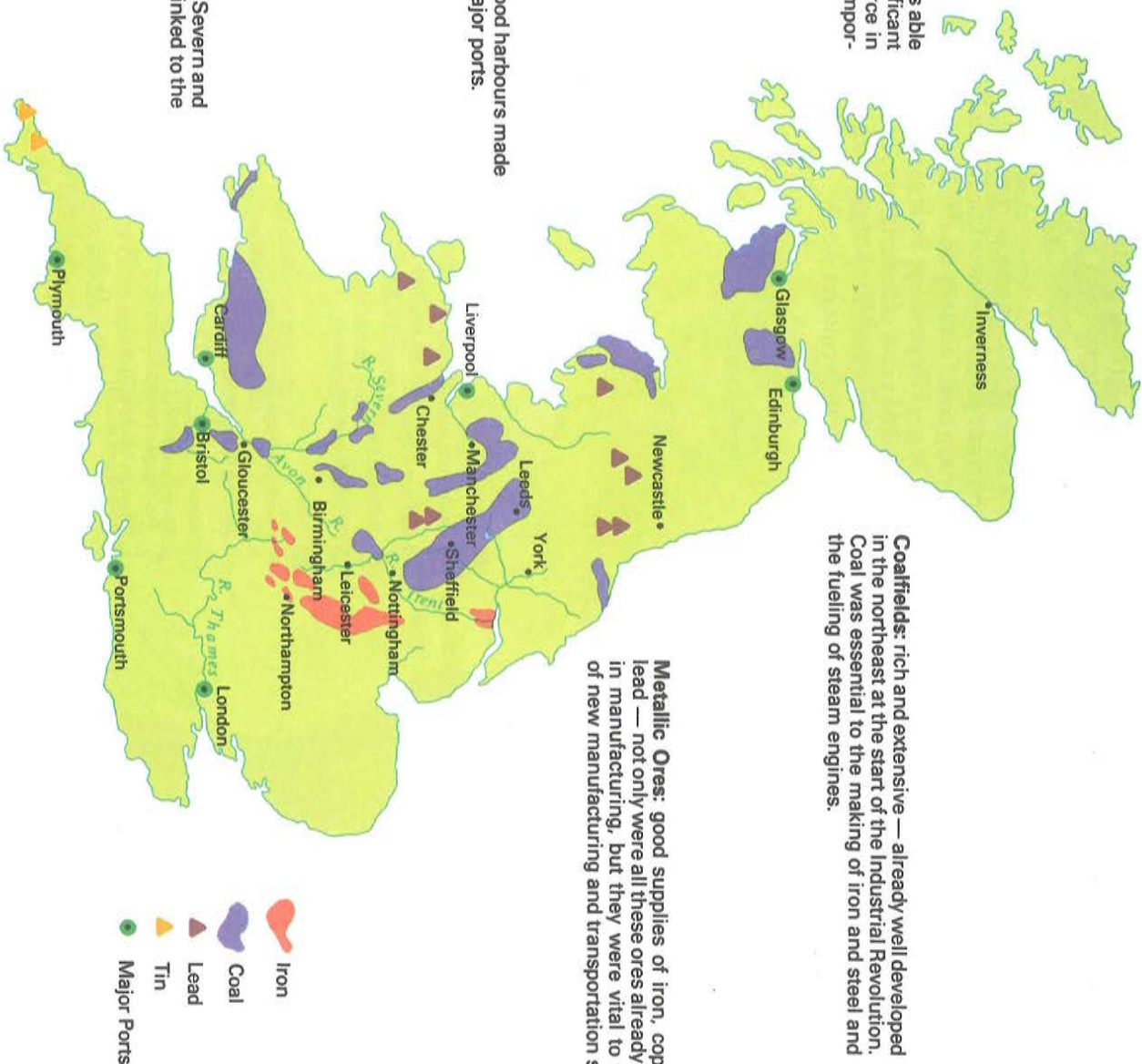
Britain had several important cultural advantages. Many people were skilled, had some basic education and were accustomed to town life. Social relations between landowners and wealthy merchants were already close. Banks, landowners and merchants were ready to invest in economic development. Finally, the English government did not discourage independent inventors and businessmen who could create wealth.

Agriculture: between 1650 and 1800, Britain was able to almost double its food production without significant additions to its cultivated land or to the work force in agriculture. This was the first and perhaps most important step in Britain's industrial growth.

Favourable Coastline: many good harbours made possible the development of major ports.

Coalfields: rich and extensive — already well developed in the northeast at the start of the Industrial Revolution. Coal was essential to the making of iron and steel and the fueling of steam engines.

Metallic Ores: good supplies of iron, copper, tin and lead — not only were all these ores already widely used in manufacturing, but they were vital to the building of new manufacturing and transportation systems.



Navigable River System: with the Thames, Severn and Trent rivers at its heart, inland areas were linked to the sea and to each other.